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Competence In Politics

By Arthur Kobina Kennedy, Dr.

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A few days ago, the President addressed the issue of competence.

He stated in reference to Dr. Bawumia that "You have never held any responsibility anywhere near the Presidency before; you don't know what it is like to be President. I will take that word from Kufuor or from Rawlings because they've been there before".

Then he turned the tables "All of them, in the offices they occupied, they should tell us what competence they displayed."

Finally, he said, "Anyway, my competence is not for them to judge, it's for the people of Ghana to judge,--"

Before going on to competence and who can judge it, I believe that we should not attack the President or others personally because we disagree with them. We should attack the positions and actions of those we disagree with; not their person.

Competence, of course, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder.

In the political realm, it is generally understood to refer to the ability to get people on one's side and to get things done.

Either in the same era or historically, people can disagree significantly over the competence of leaders. Sometimes, a leader's reputation grows with time after he/she leaves office.

In American history, Washington, Lincoln and FDR are generally considered to have been the best

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presidents. Some Presidents who were considered as failures while in office have had their reputations improve after they left office—like Truman and George H.W. Bush.

In Africa, Nkrumah and Mandela have generally been considered our greatest leaders.

In Ghana, there is deep disagreement on where Rawlings and Kufuor fall on the scale of competence and which of them was better.

Now, let us return to the President's statements. Who is entitled to judge the competence of Presidents? Former Presidents only or all the people?

Actually, the President was wrong to claim that only former Presidents Rawlings and Kufuor would be entitled to judge his competence. Indeed, given their privileged positions, one would argue that they are, perhaps, the least suited to judge whether the President is delivering for the masses. One can argue that privilege dulls the senses and make the former presidents unable to feel the pain of the masses.

Furthermore, what may be competence for former Presidents may not impress the masses. The masses are rightly pre-occupied with toilets and jobs rather than technology and GDP. Their judgment of the president's competence depends on the realities of their lives. These judgments, of course, would determine how they vote. The President will be wise to listen to them.

I believe opposition leaders help the masses see the President's shortcomings. However, their criticisms must be based on facts. Whenever the President does something good, they must acknowledge it.

Can the opposition be judged on its competence? Certainly. Leaders of the opposition should be judged on how effectively the opposition is being organized to oppose the government and to replace it if it falters at the polls. It is legitimate to judge an opposition leader's pledge to unite our country against his demonstrated ability to unite the opposition. Buhari's pledge to unite Nigeria was boosted immeasurably by his ability to unite the opposition. And leaders of the opposition can be judged on their competence in the offices they have held in the past. That is why the NPP can and should be judged on the competence of the Kufuor regime.

Let the debate be joined, with decorum and data and let us help the people whose judgment matter to judge the competence of the President competently on 7th November, 2016.

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remember WA upper west reg. 8 june 2008 that time you were running mate like Dr Alahaji Bawumia, you used the same words to kufour administration so what is your problem now

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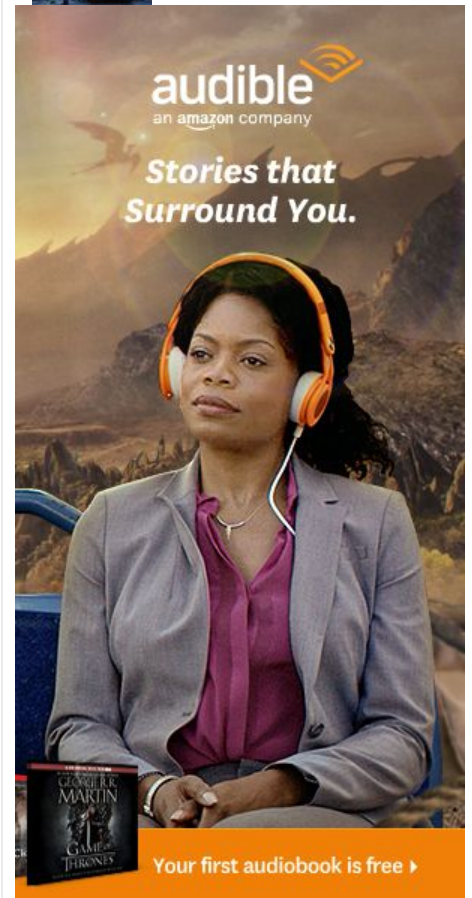
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